WASHINGTON STAR OCT 18 1960
Approved For Release 2000/06/13 : CIA-RDP75-0000
X
CPYRGHT
FOIAb3b

Kaminsky Says He Pleaded Guilty As Spy on Red Pledge of Leniency

VIENNA, Oct. 18 (AP).—A young American teacher convicted by a Soviet court as a spy, said today he pleaded guilty to espionage charges because the Russians told him he would get a light sentence.

Mark I. Kaminsky, 28, of near Niles, Mich., was sentenced September 16 to seven years imprisonment. The sentence was suspended and he was expelled from the Soviet Union, where he had been touring with a companion.

Mr. Kaminsky said he was not badly treated—he even got into long discussions with the Soviet prosecutor on who would win the United States elections—and his trial was carefully managed by the Russians.

"They gave me a lawyer," he said. "He was not of much assistance but he cheered me up. He advised me to confess to the charge wholeheartedly and tell the court I felt very remorseful. He stressed the part about 'remorseful' time and again."

At his news conference, however, Mr. Kaminsky denied he was a spy.

"I did not carry out espionage nor did I confess to espionage," Mr. Kaminsky said. "I did confess though that I was getting material for a book."

He explained later that under Soviet law the material he sought was considered espionage information.

Mr. Kaminsky's companion, Harvey C. Bennett, 26, of Tracy, Calif., who was expelled with him, said the [illegible] by Moscow [illegible] that he had "denounced" Mr. Kaminsky as a spy during the trial.

The pair arrived in Vienna last night, coming via Czechoslovakia. They told the United States Consulate they would leave for the United States as soon as possible.

The two men at first refused to see newsmen, but United States Embassy officials later persuaded them to hold a news conference to tell their side of the story.

Harvey C. Bennett, 26 (left), and Mark I. Kaminsky, 28, at a news conference in Vienna today.—AP Wirephoto via radio from Frankfurt.

"The Russians told me it would be foolish not to plead guilty," Mr. Kaminsky told newsmen. "I was gathering information for a book on the subject 'The Soviet Union Talks Peace While Preparing for War.' They took my notebook from me and said the information I had been gathering on such facts as that there are soldiers everywhere in Russia was espionage under Soviet law.

Treatment Good

"The name Powers (U-2 Pilot Francis Gary Powers) popped up many times. In fact

Approved For Release 2000/06/13 : CIA-RDP75-00001R000200600048-8

CONT'D

Approved For Release 2000/06/13 : CIA-RDP75-00001R000200600048-8

they said, 'Powers was in the air, Kaminsky on the ground.'"

Mr. Kaminsky smiled often during the news conference. He said he was sometimes questioned 8 hours a day.

But he said: "We were not brainwashed and the treatment was very good."

Mr. Bennett said:

"I explained to the Russians that Mark was writing a book and that was why he gathered information. But I had to agree that this was not the sort of activity that a normal tourist would do."

"However, I never denounced Mark. We got [illegible] before they separated us that I could stay out of the whole thing."

Mr. Kaminsky said they were seized August 25 when they tried to leave the Soviet Union at Chop on the Soviet-Czechoslovakia border.

Detained at Hotel

They were detained at a hotel in nearby Uzhgorod for nine days; then flown to Kiev where Mr. Kaminsky was put in jail while Mr. Bennett was detained at a hotel as a witness.

The trial was held September 16 and began in the morning, Mr. Kaminsky said. Sentence was passed at night. The proceedings were open and about 100 attended.

The two were released October 13. They crossed into Czechoslovakia yesterday. They were brought to the Austrian border under Czechoslovak escort and entered Austria last night.

They plan to return to the United States tonight.

Mr. Kaminsky said they were told at Chop that they had entered a restricted area and that their films must therefore be developed and a personal search conducted.

That was when the Russians seized Mr. Kaminsky's notebook.

"I think the talk about the restricted area was just an excuse to be able to detain and search us," he said, "since Uzghorod, where we finally exited, was just as much in a restricted zone. The entire border area is restricted."

Explaining the note book, Mr. Kaminsky, a tall, heavy-set man with a receding hairline said:

"It was mostly a photo log, where I explained the photos that I took.

"As I took a lot of photos about cows, the word 'cow' appeared very often. The Soviet interrogators got very excited about that. They thought it was a code word.

'One of the photos showed soldiers on the road which they told me was gathering military information."

Mr. Bennett injected:

"I took a photo of several flagpoles without any flags and they tried very hard to make me admit they were radio antennas."

Mr. Kaminsky said the Soviets appeared worried about the whole thing, apparently because of the bad effects the affair could have on American tourism to the Soviet Union.

"The treatment simply was too good, the guards fell over themselves to do things for me," he said. "I got quite friendly with the prosecutor. We had long political discussions. The main topic was: Who will win the elections, Nixon or Kennedy?

"I was not really afraid all that time because they made it quite clear that I wouldn't be shot. At first I was nervous, then just bored. I lost some weight.

"Now looking back on it, I must say it was an interesting experience, although it was dangerous.

Questioners Polite

"The hours of questioning were long, but the interrogators were always polite. The food was plain, but good. For instance, I had soft-boiled eggs each morning but trouble eating them with the large wooden spoon they gave me.

"At the time of the trial I thought I would spend maybe half of the 7-year term. But the Soviets made a very concerted effort that I should appeal the verdict.

"It was pretty clear to me then that I would not be in jail long."

"There was a good part of humor at the trial and the 100 spectators laughed often. There was not much tension.

"We demanded to be allowed to contact the American Embassy in Moscow, and they even led us to the telegraph office but they always failed to get us a connection."

While Mr. Kaminsky was in jail, Mr. Bennett said: "I was mostly pacing the floor. There was a guard with me in the same room and I tried to play chess with him. He wasn't much interested though."

Mr. Kaminsky and Mr. Bennett had hired an automobile in Finland and entered Russia last July 7 for a motor tour in the Soviet Union. They were arrested August 25 while driving from Moscow to Minsk.

Financed by Fund

The Soviet news agency Tass said Mr. Kaminsky admitted gathering information on troop concentrations, radio and power station locations, military camps, and their approach roads, and details about bridges, railway stations and heavy industrial centers.

It said he was financed by a "spy organization" calling itself the Fair Craft Fund to which he planned to submit a report when he got back to the United States. Tass said he also planned to write a "slanderous" book about the Soviet Union and illustrate it with pictures he took on his trip. Coded notes were found in a notebook he carried, Tass said.

An attorney in Philadelphia for the Northcraft Educational Fund said the fund provided $2,000 as travel expenses so Mr. Kaminsky and Mr. Bennett could study abroad. The attorney refused to name the backers of the organization or give its headquarters.

Tass said Mr. Kaminsky's sentence was suspended and his expulsion ordered after he pleaded for clemency and showed "sincere . . . repentance."

Approved For Release 2000/06/13 : CIA-RDP75-00001R000200600048-8